

# **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Public Transport Issues in Chorley**

**July 2015**



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## PREFACE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested the review to be undertaken following discussions by Members on issues that their constituents had brought to their attention over the years in relation to public transport. The overall aim of the Group is to try to influence the provision of reliable services that cover the whole of Chorley that are reflective of people needs.

The Group accepted that a review of the issues relating to all public transport would be too much to take on and agreed to narrow the scope by investigating how the Council could influence improved bus transport services for its residents. The Council would however continue to lobby the Rail Companies regarding individual rail issues by correspondence and seek to recommend an annual Three Tier Forum meeting being held, dedicated to transport related issues. Members were keen to make sure that the current level of bus services were protected and where possible, improved upon, especially in the provision of sustainable community services to the elderly, isolated and often vulnerable members of our community.

I would like to thank the Task Group Members for their deliberations and the officers and external representatives of parish councils and community groups of Chorley who made a contribution to this report. The representations that we received have proved invaluable and enabled us to produce a set of recommendations that we feel will improve the current arrangements to better serve the residents in their experience of living in their communities.



Councillor Robert Fynamore (Chair)



Councillor Julia Berry (Vice Chair)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group undertook a scrutiny inquiry to review Public Transport Issues in Chorley.

### Objective

To investigate how Chorley Council can influence improved bus transport services for residents of the borough.

### Desired Outcomes

1. Improvement of subsidised routes across the borough including concessions and levels of fares.
2. Reliable rural bus services that will service Chorley and its surrounding areas providing sustainable community services to elderly, isolated and often vulnerable members of our community.
3. Improved sources of information about transport services.

### Task Group Membership

Councillor Robert Finnamore (Chair)  
Councillor Julia Berry (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Charlie Bromilow  
Councillor Margaret France  
Councillor Mike Handley  
Councillor Mark Jarnell  
Councillor Matthew Lynch  
Councillor June Molyneaux  
Councillor Alistair Morwood  
Councillor Kim Snape  
Councillor John Walker

### Officer Support:

#### Lead Officers

Lesley-Ann Fenton Director Customer and Advice Service

#### Democratic Services

Dianne Scambler Democratic and Member Services Officer

### Meetings

The meeting papers of the Group can be found on the Council's website:

[www.chorley.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.chorley.gov.uk/scrutiny).

### Contribution of Evidence

The Task Group would like to thank all those who have provided evidence and contributed to the Inquiry.

## **LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Cabinet is asked to consider the following recommendations:

- 1. That when the revised criteria is applied to subsidised services operating in Chorley and appear to be detrimental, any issues or concerns will be referred to full Council requesting approval to lobby Lancashire County Council to minimise the impact in Chorley.**
- 2. Should Lancashire County Council take forward the Parish Partnership Offer, it is recommended that Lancashire County Council (LCC) consult and work with Cumbria County Council to explore how a Community Wheels type scheme could be undertaken and fully funded by LCC in Lancashire.**
- 3. That Chorley Council contact Cumbria County Council to gather more information on their approach to recruiting volunteer drivers and to work with LCC and parishes to implement best practice in Chorley.**
- 4. That the Parish Partnership Offer (should it be progressed by LCC in future) and the recruitment of volunteer drivers should be included as projects in the Rural Communities Action Plan and monitored accordingly.**
- 5. That Chorley Council write to Lancashire County Council and all relevant operators to progress any issues raised by the parishes that have not already been covered as part of this review.**
- 6. To explore the offer with Stagecoach to meet on a regular basis to develop better working relations and improve communications and include Lancashire County Council representatives.**
- 7. That upon completion of the West Coast Strategic Studies process (expected April 2016) the Council will seek an update, from and continue to lobby Lancashire County Council and Network Rail, on the establishment of a railway station at Coppull.**
- 8. That Chorley Council follows up Northern Rails commitment to looking at the Lighting at Adlington Station and if necessary also follow-up the delivery of the Customer Information Screens if installation does not take place in Summer 2015.**
- 9. Once the Council is aware of the new franchise holder (from February 2016), the Executive Cabinet to continue to lobby and raise the current issues, in particular to include additional rail services to the airport from Adlington from December 2016.**
- 10. That consideration is given to including railway station enhancements and other public transport infrastructure across the borough in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) 123 list revisions and be monitored by the Council to ensure funding is allocated and commitments are fulfilled.**

11. That any conditions made through the Buckshaw Village S106 agreement regarding the up-grading and re-opening of Alker Lane Bridge which will improve access to Buckshaw Railway Station from Astley Village is followed up by the Council to ensure commitments are fulfilled.
12. That the Future Governance Viability Working Group notes the contents of this report on the benefits and potential areas of focus for a Combined Transport Authority for Lancashire in order to improve public transport for Chorley residents and the Council to use the findings to influence any future discussions regarding the establishment of a Combined Authority and its role in transport provision.
13. That Lancashire County Council re-considers the displaying of bus timetables at all bus stops and shelters across the borough and explores the possibilities of funding this service by the use of advertising by local companies.
14. That Lancashire County Council in conjunction with the operators explores better ways of communicating increased bus fares to its customers.
15. To highlight to the Executive Cabinet the importance of considering all public transport needs for its residents when undertaking all relevant Council projects, for example, the provision of bicycle racks and storage units and positioning of bus stops as part of the Market Walk development proposals.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **BUS SERVICES**

At the start of the review, County Councillor John Fillis, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and Tony Moreton, Assistant Director of Sustainable Transport for Lancashire County Council provided the Group with an overview of current bus service provision across the borough, the difficulties regarding the provision of bus services in rural areas, proposed changes to services following recent consultation and the issues they faced with Community Travel including sustained volunteering.

Current bus service provision across the borough consists of a mixture of commercial and subsidised routes. Commercial routes (80%) are those operated for profit and include:

No:	Route:	Frequency:
	Network Chorley Services to Chorley estates, Coppull, Astley Village, Great Knowley, Eaves Lane, Heath Charnock, Adlington, Charnock Richard and Croston	
24	Chorley – Blackburn	Every 30 minutes
109	Chorley – Buckshaw – Preston	4 an hour

115	Chorley – Preston via Moss Side	Hourly
119	Chorley – Chorley Hospital – Euxton – Runshaw – Leyland	Hourly
125	Preston – Chorley – Bolton	Every 10 minutes
362	Chorley – Wigan	Every 15 minutes

There are three main bus operators in Chorley, Stage Coach, Arriva and Transdev that provide their services on a number of bus routes in and around Chorley.

Subsidised routes (20%) are provided by Lancashire County Council and they currently spend around £800,000 per annum to provide a bus service for the residents of Chorley. A total of 20 services provide a mixture of daytime, evening and rural services:

No:	Route:	Service:
	Contribution to Network Chorley Services (75k)	
14	Chorley - Buckshaw	Daytime
110	Preston - Croston	Daytime
118	Leyland – Clayton Brook - Blackburn	Daytime
337/347	Chorley – Eccleston – Mawdesley – Ormskirk/Southport	Daytime
342	Diversion via Coppull Old Parish	
113	Preston – Wigan, Chorley Town Services	Evening
24	Chorley - Blackburn	Evening
109	Chorley - Preston	Evening
109	Chorley – Preston (Network Chorley)	Sunday

Following recent announcements from the Government regarding future funding, the County Council needed to find additional estimated savings of £300m between 2014 and 2018. This meant that a Network review of all current bus services was required. The review, currently in its early stages, is expected to take around 18 months to complete and Chorley, South Ribble and Preston would be assessed as one area in line with the bus routes offered by the commercial bus companies.

Lancashire County Council spend approximately £7m per year subsidising local bus services and the current assessment of contracts is based on a financial criteria where 40% of the cost of the operation is met by passenger revenue. This way of ranking could result in those contracts that are underperforming financially being more likely to be withdrawn irrespective of the community needs they fulfil.

## **TRAIN SERVICES**

Chorley is served by both First TransPennine Express and Northern Rail services between Manchester Piccadilly and Preston and beyond. Most TPE trains start back from Manchester Airport and run through to Blackpool, though there are also a few services through to Barrow in Furness and Windermere. Northern Rail services

meanwhile run hourly to Blackpool and Manchester Victoria and also to Preston and Hazel Grove via Manchester Piccadilly.

On Sundays there are two trains an hour to Blackpool and a limited service to Barrow northbound whilst southbound there are hourly services to Manchester Victoria and Manchester Airport (with a few additional Airport trains).

Chorley's rail services provide a link for the commuters of Lancashire to Preston, Manchester and Bolton.

Three small villages which form part of the borough of Chorley, Buckshaw, Adlington and Euxton all have railway stations.

It was announced by the Department for Transport in December 2009, the line between Preston and Manchester, on which Chorley is situated, would be electrified to make journeys faster, quieter and more reliable. This will improve travel between Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, Blackpool, Leeds and York and is vital in supporting the region's long-term, low carbon economic growth. This work is due to be completed by winter 2016/17 as a consequence, coach travel replaces train journeys at key times.

## **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION**

### Evidence

The group considered Lancashire County Council's new assessment criteria for subsidised routes across the borough to understand what changes will affect provision in Chorley and researched information about how services across the borough are communicated.

### Witnesses

The group consulted with a number of parish councils, partner organisations and community groups that included:

Elected Members of the Council to build up their perceived picture of the current issues across Chorley.

County Councillor John Fillis – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport (Lancashire County Council) and Tony Moreton, Assistant Director of Sustainable Transport (Lancashire County Council) to understand current provision.

Parish Councils to understand current rural provision and how it can be improved upon.

Craig Harrop, Client and Stakeholder Manager for Northern Rail and Tom Carbury, Senior Strategic Planner for Network Rail

Councillor Guy Harkin, Deputy Leader Bolton Council and Vice Chair of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) Committee (Greater Manchester Combined Authority) and



Chair of the Capital Projects and Policy Sub Committee (TfGM) accompanied by Rod Fawcett, Transport Policy Manager at TfGM attended a meeting to explain the work of the Combined Authority in relation to transport including public transport and Outlined the benefits having a combined transport authority has for the residents of Greater Manchester.

Caroline Watson (Community Transport Officer), Cumbria County Council attended a meeting to explain how they have implemented a Community Transport Scheme called Community Wheels.

### Terms of reference

To review the new Subsidised Bus Services criteria following a recent consultation by Lancashire County Council.

Understanding current provision and identifying gaps in the service.

Investigating areas of best practice amongst other community transport schemes.

Influencing the proposed Parish Partnership scheme proposed by Lancashire County Council for community transport.

Looking at ways we can better communicate transport availability to our residents.

Investigate the potential for using the Information Centre at Chorley Interchange.

Continue to lobby Network Rail about individual rail issues by correspondence.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the Task Group and the specific recommendations resulting from them are set out in this section of the report. The Task Group recognises that for the recommendations to be successful it will be dependent on the participation of everybody that is involved in public transport, including the County Council, Parish Councils and transport providers.

## **NEW CRITERIA FOR SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES**

The majority of local bus services operating within Lancashire are run on a commercial basis by a number of different bus service providers. Lancashire County Council currently subsidises a number of local bus services throughout the county and as part of their budget agreement made at full Council in February 2014, County commenced a full review of the subsidise local bus network which would be undertaken on an area by area basis.

Subsidised bus and community transport services provide transport to ensure people who live in areas not served by commercial bus services have access to a wide range of facilities to meet their needs. Subsidised bus services are currently ranked by their financial performance, using criteria which states that 40% of the cost of the service must be met through passenger revenue.

This way of ranking can result in those services that underperform financially being more likely to be withdrawn irrespective of the community needs that they fulfil. With the challenging financial constraints and potential budget reductions proposed over the next four years and taking into account the priorities set out in the Local Transport Plan, the County Council were proposing to revise the criteria in a bid to measure services in a more sustainable way and to move away from a purely financial assessment.

The new proposed scoring criteria focussed on a much wider assessment for the service that included, serving people who travel for either employment, shopping, education, leisure or a mix, priority neighbourhoods, accessibility and older/disabled people. A period of consultation was undertaken by the County Council on each of the proposed criteria and respondents were asked to consider the suggested categories and scores. Members of this task group submitted their concerns against each of the elements and suggested alternative scores where they thought it appropriate. The dialogue below outlines the reasoning as to why the criteria was suggested in the first place, any issue that this group had and the amendments that County had made in response to the consultation that had agreed with the Task Groups view:

### **Criteria: Journey purpose, business growth**

A key priority for Lancashire County Council's subsidised bus services will be to consider the principal purpose of the bus service and how it is used.

Members were concerned that there was no acknowledgment of Social Isolation or Rural Accessibility within the scoring criteria given the aging population in Lancashire and many parts of it are rural, already with limited transport access. Members feel that this should be reviewed and that the Social Isolation and Rural Accessibility categories should have a minimum score rating of (4).

#### *Lancashire County Council's response to the consultation:*

*Whilst there was a general consensus of acceptance of this element, many of the comments received suggested the scoring criteria was too focused on employment and biased against Shopping, Personal Business and Leisure, all of which should be deemed more worthy than the initial scores given.*

*Primary concerns raised revolved around social inclusion and personal wellbeing suggested these should be of greater consideration for the journey purposes. Especially in rural areas where local amenities are limited and travel to neighbouring communities for those with no access to personal transport.*

### **Criteria: Sustainable economic growth**

This element considered which bus services had the potential to serve employment areas, including business parks, town and city centres.

Members commented that some businesses operate on a 24 hour basis, and do not operate just between the hours of 9am to 5pm, five days a week. They often operate well into the evening or early in the morning and are not necessarily located in designated business parks or centres. Bus services needed to be available at these times, so that employees can get to work and any scoring needed to reflect this.

It was also felt that the criteria was too focused on designated employment areas. Some scoring needs to be allocated to businesses located in rural areas and at different times of the day. To have no score for any of these factors was not considered acceptable, especially considering the rural profile of Chorley. It was considered that the following

categories: Access to rural businesses and service centres (location) and Access to business outside of core hours (time) should be allocated a minimum scoring of (2)

Lancashire County Council's response to the consultation:

*Whilst there was a general consensus of acceptance of this element, it was asked how this was going to be measured and what actually determined an employment area.*

*This was acknowledged and was felt that measuring actual journeys to employment areas could be difficult to ascertain and could be more appropriately assessed through the Business Growth, Journey Purpose element. It was proposed to remove this element altogether and better reflect employment by an enhance score within the Business Growth, Journey Purpose element.*

**Criteria: Operational service days**

This element considered on what days of the week the bus service runs giving a higher priority for those routes running Monday to Saturday daytime.

The Group felt that some assessment needed to be undertaken on usage, to identify where there may be lulls in usage for example, at lunch times, mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Consideration also needed to be given to a reduced service at these times. However, this reduction should be compensated by the provision of services in the evenings and at weekends to ensure that adequate services are running at these times to meet demand.

Monday – Saturday daytime – consistent usage at all times (5)

Monday – Saturday day time – variable usage (4)

Daily evening score (3)

It was felt that these scores would support rural isolation and access to work for people who work on shifts.

Lancashire County Council's response to the consultation:

*The County Council acknowledged the comments received regarding the importance of keeping the evening network, especially early evening, as these are generally used for a whole range of journey purposes. It was now proposed to split the Monday to Saturday and Sunday evenings into different priorities, as weekday evenings are deemed more desirable than Sunday evenings, with customer demand being greater. Operational times have now been included on the element to define each period.*

*A score will be allocated (up to a maximum of 5 points) based on whether services run during Monday to Saturday daytime (0700-1830) (5 points), Sunday daytime (0900-1830) (3), Monday to Saturday evening (1830-2330) (3) and Sunday evening (1830-2330) (1).*

**Criteria: Accessibility – travel choice**

This element considered whether there are alternative public transport services available, both bus and rail, in the locality and categorises them according to how frequent and how far these are from the bus services concerned.

The Group were happy with the concept of reasonable alternative but felt that County were failing to acknowledge that the alternative offered may mean that the person<sub>11</sub>

has to undertake a convoluted route which can often have additional cost and time implications for the user.

Members suggested the following category core ratings:

Alternative within 2 hours during daytime within no more than 800 metres (similar route and duration as far as is reasonably possible (duration no more than half the distance again)) (6)

Alternative within 2 hours during daytime at same location (similar route and duration as far as is reasonably possible (duration no more than half the distance again)) (5)

Alternative within 1 hour during daytime within no more than 800 metres (similar route and duration as far as is reasonably possible (duration no more than half the distance again)) (4)

Alternative within 1 hour during daytime at same location (similar route and duration as far as is reasonably possible (duration no more than half the distance again)) (2)

Lancashire County Council's response to the consultation:

*There was high a general consensus of acceptance of this element, although a number of comments received were keen to stress that 800m was too much of a distance to access alternatives for the elderly or the disabled, as well as a consideration of the topography of the area. Other comments received suggested that Rail should not be treated as an alternative as higher costs may be involved, particular where elderly or disabled are not able to access the rail network with their concessionary pass.*

*County acknowledged the comments made, however the reasoning behind the 800m figure was to identify those areas within towns and villages, both rural and urban, where alternative forms of public transport did exist but not necessarily along each road through that particular location.*

*It is proposed to leave this element as originally consulted upon. A score will be allocated based on whether alternatives existed ranging from 8 points where no alternative was available to 0 points where an alternative within 1 hour existed at the same location, although this does not necessarily mean to the same destination.*

**Criteria: Service usage**

This element considers how many people are carried per year on services. Those services carrying most passengers will receive a higher priority score.

The Group agreed with this methodology and responded accordingly.

However, it would seem that there was a no consensus of acceptance of this element, with less than half of respondents agreeing with the element. Whilst service usage is a key component, there was a number of comments received suggesting that scoring passenger usage in terms of actual numbers is not a satisfactory method. Furthermore that it is biased against possibly vital low cost services with low usage, in favour of possible more high cost services with high usage.

Lancashire County Council's response to the consultation:

*The County Council acknowledged the many comments received on this element and analysed alternative ways of measuring service usage and it was now proposed to*

*revise this element to measure usage by calculating passengers per service mile and cost per passenger.*

*This new criteria will be used to score each contract to decide what the network would look like and would be the definition of a cost effective and affordable level of service. Discussions were also taking place with bus operators to ascertain if improvements could be made to the commercial service provision.*

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. When the revised criteria is applied to subsidised services operating in Chorley and appear to be detrimental, any issues or concerns will be referred to full Council requesting approval to lobby Lancashire County Council to minimise the impact in Chorley.**

## **PARISH PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL**

In response to feedback received on the subsidised services consultation the County Council reported that they are working on a Parish Partnership offer that would provide a tailored bus service for individual areas across Lancashire based upon the needs of those communities that would use it. The County Council would purchase and maintain a fleet of 16 seater buses that would be used to provide bus journey's across the borough on routes that the commercial operators don't cover. The proposal is in its early infancy and County welcomed any views that the Group may have. Once the details were finalised they would be consulting widely on the proposals.

To help members understand the type of arrangement that could be implemented by Lancashire County Council and what the impact on residents could potentially be, the Group invited Caroline Watson, a Community Transport Officer at Cumbria County Council to talk to the Group about their Community Wheels Scheme. Last year, Cumbria County Council took the unprecedented step of withdrawing all its funding of subsidised routes across the County, a number of these routes were taken over by private operators and any gap in provision was met by the Community Wheels scheme.

Using funding made available by Central Government, Cumbria County Council had introduced the rural bus scheme, with the aim of providing a bus service accessible to everyone in rural areas. Initially trialled in one area of the Cumbrian County, the service had been developed county wide over the last 5/6 years and had been tailored to meet the needs of its residents.

Cumbria County Council purchased six mini-buses that they maintain and make available for use across the County. The scheme itself is run by volunteers and everyone who uses the scheme becomes a member. It is this membership that drives the scheme, deciding on routes and level of fares. The scheme is not open to visitors to the County and it must not become a bus service. The scheme has been particularly successful in the more rural areas of the County and helped to address issues such as social isolation, especially for older people who don't have access to other modes of transport. So that users of the scheme did not lose out on not being able to use their concessionary bus passes, one of the main factors of the schemes success has had to be competitive fares.

The County Council also operates an additional village wheels scheme whereby they contract private hire companies/taxis/small minibuses to provide a more bespoke<sub>13</sub>

service that is proving to be more cost effective for small groups of people and is tailored around a specific need. The County Council have been able to negotiate reduced fares as they are used on a regular basis and usually at a time when they are quiet, between the hours of 10am to 2pm. The taxi firms have been happy to take these types of fares as it gives them additional work on a regular basis.

The County Council had been surprised at the number of services that private operators had taken on when the County Council had taken its decision to cancel its subsidised services. However, they were looking to do a review of its services as some of the routes initially taken over have recently been cancelled or reduced and further reductions were expected.

At the meeting attended by representatives of Lancashire County Council where they had raised the Parish Partnership Offer, there was an expectation from Lancashire County Council that any such scheme developed in Chorley or elsewhere in Lancashire would be partially funded by both the Borough and Parish Councils. This is not the case in Cumbria. Currently the County Council funds everything and are able to balance the books with the profits of the scheme including any private hire arrangements that are in place.

**Recommendation:**

- 2. Should Lancashire County Council decide to take forward the Parish Partnership Offer, it is recommended that Lancashire County Council (LCC) consult and work with Cumbria County Council to explore how a Community Wheel based scheme could be undertaken and be fully funded by LCC in Lancashire.**

The Group discussed how existing community car based travel that had been operated by Lancashire County Council had folded, due to the lack of volunteers, problems with recruiting and availability of volunteers at key times and were keen to ascertain how the schemes in Cumbria had addressed such issues. It was explained that the success of the schemes in Cumbria was due to its advertisement and recruitment strategy, by use of positive press to celebrate successes within communities and advertise by use of parish community noticeboards. The authority undertakes door to door postal drops and has circulated printed information around the area as much as possible. The website is regularly updated but the County Council has found that printed flyers distributed by the volunteers and drivers to be more successful.

One of the key factors in maintaining their reliable volunteer pool is their philosophy that people can do as little or as much as they want or are available to do, and that there is no pressure to do more. The voluntary element of the scheme is extremely important in keeping costs down and many communities realising this, have been keen to get involved to maintain the service. In Cumbria, drivers are only required to undertake a CRB check if they are driving one of the County's owned community vehicles, if they are using their own transport, they do not as they fall outside of the CRB rules, however, to date they had had no incidents, and vulnerable groups were treated differently.

Members noted that one of the key successes at Cumbria County Council was their strong partnership working with the parishes especially regarding the recruitment of volunteers drivers.

**Recommendation:**

- 3. That Chorley Council contact Cumbria County Council to gather more information on their approach to recruiting volunteer drivers and to work with LCC and parishes to implement best practice in Chorley.**

As far as they were aware Cumbria County Council was currently the only authority that had embarked on this type of rural based travel scheme. It had been a difficult decision to take but up to now they had been able to meet the gap in provision. They would continue to monitor the situation and were hopeful that they would continue to meet demand.

**Recommendation:**

- 4. That the Parish Partnership Offer (should it be progressed by LCC in future) and the recruitment of volunteer drivers should be included as projects in the Rural Communities Action Plan and monitored accordingly.**

## **PARISH COUNCIL CONSULTATION**

The group consulted with parish councils to ascertain what views they had and if they had any suggestions for improvement. These views would help the Council when negotiating with Lancashire County Council in the future regarding any potential parish partnership travel arrangements as previously discussed earlier in the report.

Some of the issues fed back to the group had already been raised with the providers but it was agreed that any additional concerns or suggestions would be raised with the relevant organisations and any responses fed back to the appropriate Parish Councils. Many of the issues raised reinforced the groups view that much of the gap in provision concerned residents in the more rural areas of the borough and it was felt that a better understanding of the whole picture from which services could be improved upon would be by facilitating regular dialogue between us, the County Council and the operators.

At a recent Town Centre meeting, the manager of Stagecoach had offered to meet with the Council on a regular basis in an attempt to improve communications and forge more effective partnership working for the benefit of Chorley residents and Members felt that this offer should be pursued. This could be done by the use of the Councils Neighbourhood Area Meetings.

**Recommendations:**

- 5. That Chorley Council write to Lancashire County Council and all relevant operators to progress any issues raised by the parishes that have not already been covered as part of this review.**
- 6. To explore the offer with Stagecoach to meet on a regular basis to develop better working relations and improve communications and include Lancashire County Council representatives.**

## TRAIN TRAVEL

The Group contacted Network Rail and Northern Rail, the providers of trains servicing Chorley. Members raised a number of issues and proposals in respect of rail services provided by the two organisations at Stations in Chorley. Some of the matters raised had been previously discussed; however, the Council were aware that infrastructure improvements are ongoing which may allow for an updated position.

Detailed responses have been received from both organisations and members were pleased that some of the issues were being looked into across the borough and were a little more confident that services could be improved upon in the future. The key issues raised and responded to by both organisations were as follows:

**BUCKSHAW PARKWAY** – In order to address residents and students concerns and the need to encourage more local residents to access the station by foot rather than by car and alleviate the pressure on the car park, the Council are proposing Northern Rail re-consider allowing direct passenger access to the south side of the railway station from Runshaw College car park via a ticketed barrier. This land is not in the Council's ownership but we would be willing to facilitate discussions with the land owner and Runshaw College to enable an access to be created. Alternatively, could consideration be given to the installation of a footbridge across the railway line from the south side to the north side (outside the confines of the railway station area) which would enable speedier access to the stations ticket office?

There is currently a bridge over the railway line at the bottom of Alker Lane, whilst this is still some distance from the railway station and would not address the issue outlined above it was the feeling of the group that this could be an additional means of facilitating access to the station by foot or cycle for the residents of Astley Village and help deter access to the station by car. However access to the bridge is currently restricted by the owners. Should the Council be successful in working with the owner and Lancashire County Council to open the bridge for public use as a footpath and cycle way, would Northern Rail object to its use?

### Response by Northern Rail:

*Ticketless travel continues to be a huge issue for the rail industry with the annual cost currently around £240million and this is something that they are determined to reduce. If access to the Preston bound platform was provided they feel that this would compromise revenue protection for short journeys to Leyland and Preston as well as longer journeys into Greater Manchester. They are looking to expand the number of ticket vending machines and ticket barriers across their network, ensuring the prioritisation of unmanned stations where there isn't an opportunity to purchase a ticket and stations with a high footfall in respect of ticket barriers.*

*Access to Platform 2, the Preston bound platform, at Buckshaw Parkway station is fully accessible via the over bridge from Platform 1 and also by the station lifts. If they were to provide direct access to Platform 2 this would mean customers would have to cross over to Platform 1 to purchase a ticket before boarding, as National Conditions of Carriage state that before you travel you must have a ticket which is valid for the journey you intend to make.*



*As a compromise, pedestrian and cycle access has been provided into the station car park from Central Drive and linked to the new housing development taking place to the west of Central Drive. This will make it easier for students attending Runshaw College and for those working at the various offices located on Euxton Lane. Having revisited this issue again with the Station and Revenue Protection Teams as well as Lancashire County Council I can confirm that we will not be considering direct access to the Preston bound platform. In terms of any bridge or access improvements outside of the railway lease then this is ultimately a decision for the Councils however they would expect along with their colleagues at Network rail to be fully consulted on any such schemes.*

**COPPULL** - Last year Lancashire County Council (LCC) in consultation with the District Councils produced a Central Lancashire Transport Masterplan. Included within that plan was a commitment on behalf of LCC to undertake a study on the level of current/potential demand for the re-opening of the station at Coppull, particularly in the light of the Council's aspiration in Chorley's Economic Development Plan to create a new motorway junction at nearby Charnock Richard. This study has commenced and we are expecting to receive the findings shortly.

There was an understanding that Chorley Council via Lancashire County Council had exchanged e-mails with Network Rail back in August 2013 seeking views on the re-opening of the station. At that time, it was highlighted that the two track section between Wigan and Balshaw Lane would need to be enhanced at some point to four tracks which would be necessary to re-open the station. However, it was also highlighted the lack of potential demand, the possible damage to service patterns/speed and the close proximity to Chorley as weighing against re-opening. In conclusion, whilst it outlined the challenges facing any re-opening it also acknowledged that should a study be undertaken your company would remain as supportive as possible.

Given 18 months have passed members were interested to know whether views on the re-opening of Coppull had changed. In particular, whether there was greater clarity on undertaking the enhancements from two tracks to four in the area and should the LCC study demonstrate a justification for the station what are the next steps that would be taken to forward this with Network Rail including an understanding of the scale of funding required for a new station and associated infrastructure and potential sources.

*Response by Network Rail:*

*At present, the prospects of developing a station on the West Coast Main Line at Coppull remain low, particularly due to expected future demand on the route, predominantly for additional Intermodal Freight services, new inter-regional express services and the expected increase of long distance traffic as a result of the High Speed 2 Train Service Specification.*

*Discussions have been undertaken with Lancashire County Council and their consultant Jacobs in the last six months to assist with demand analysis for a potential station at Coppull and Network Rail are happy to continue supporting the work of both the County and the Borough councils to progress the case for a station at Coppull, particularly as some of the issues outlined above may present the opportunity for developments such as new stations.*

*Network Rail is currently facilitating a West Coast Strategic Studies (WCSS) workstream on behalf of the industry to understand longer term requirements for the network, particularly taking account of High Speed 2 and growth in other rail sectors. Lancashire County Council is a member of the Regional Stakeholder Group (North) for the studies and will be kept apprised of developments and industry views regarding future service levels, potential gaps and constraints on the current network and the Options for Funders developed to address some of the gaps and constraints. The Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership has also been invited to the Regional Stakeholder Group (North).*

*There is a shared view that the proposed location of Coppull station is in a constrained part of the West Coast Main Line and therefore an expectation to consider options as part of the WCSS process to reduce the impact of the constraint. Upon completion of the West Coast Strategic Studies process (expected completion date is April 2016) the industry will have a much better understanding of the longer term outlook and possible requirements. Once this stage is reached, consideration of a station at Coppull will be better informed and should also provide the opportunity to explore efficiencies for scheme development.*

**EUXTON, BALSRAW LANE** - The station was re-opened in 1998 and as far as members are aware the station does not have any full-time staff, PA system or ticket office or any real time display screens providing passenger information. Comments have also been received that the signage around the station is limited making the station access difficult to find. Members sought confirmation of any plans to refurbish the station in the future and whether improved signage and the provision of real time passenger information could be installed?

*Response by Northern Rail:*

*It was confirmed that there are no plans to refurbish the station within the next 12 months however the group's comments were noted and would be discussed with colleagues and Lancashire County Council.*

**ADLINGTON** - Previous discussions had suggested improvements to the Stations' infrastructure expected to be completed by December 2016 that would make it possible for an increase in the service. As December 2016 is fast approaching Members wanted assurance that the timetable would be reviewed post December 2016 and consideration given to additional services stopping at Adlington?

In previous discussions with Adlington Town Council it was the groups understanding that they were informed that the re-instatement of a direct train to Manchester Airport was not possible, as although there had been a 50% increase in passenger numbers Adlington is the least busy station on the line. Members saw this a chicken and egg situation whereby it is only possible to clearly ascertain the demand for an airport service once the train is re-instated at Adlington.

Adlington is identified as a local service centre for housing growth in the Council's Local Plan and between 2012 and 2026 land has been allocated to accommodate an additional 310 dwellings. In the light of the infrastructure improvements outlined above

and the assurance that there will be a population growth in Adlington can you confirm that consideration will also be given to re-instating a direct train to Manchester Airport?

Local ward and County Councillors have received health and safety complaints regarding the lack of adequate lighting at the railway station from the platform to the exits onto Railway road. One of the exit routes in particular is across a cobbled inclined footpath. Members have also received enquiries regarding the lack of real time train information at this station and wanted to know if any improvements would be made.

Northern Rail response:

*The current timetable and its stopping pattern are constrained by the current line speed and whilst they have been able to provide an increased frequency from Adlington in the morning and afternoon peaks it is not possible to maintain this throughout the day. The point to point journey time that is driven by the current line speed is the main reason for the lack of available track capacity along the route. What this means in terms of day to day operations is that they cannot accommodate our slower stopping service in between the express services as there is insufficient headway.*

*Another key constraint that affects the capacity on this route are the junctions at Euxton and Salford, their services have tightly timed paths through these junctions and any further increase in journey time would mean the timetable on this and other routes would not work. The North West Electrification program is currently underway as well as the Northern Hub improvement work in Manchester, both these schemes will improve the routes journey times and ease the bottleneck through Salford and into Manchester. Providing the Network Rail project timescales do not slip the future Northern franchisee will have an opportunity to explore additional stops at Adlington and indeed Blackrod from December 2016.*

*Customer Information Screens will be fitted this summer and the station management team have been asked to look into the lighting.*

**CHORLEY** - The Council has over recent years been working with key partners and stakeholders to visually improve key gateways and improve access into Chorley town centre and are currently progressing with a proposal for improving accessibility in to the town centre through the Steeley Lane subway in conjunction with Lancashire County Council. Part of this scheme proposes making changes to the subway entrance adjacent to the station staff car park with the possible introduction of steps and landscaping to enhance the station and subway entrance. Further public realm improvements are also proposed to Steeley Lane itself to enhance pavements and crossing points into the southbound platform, including some artwork on the rear of the platform wall facing Steeley Lane. There is an understanding that Network Rail are undertaking some electrification improvement work which will impact upon the subway structure itself but could you clarify who the appropriate persons are within your organisation to consult with on our proposals in order to take it forward and support us to progress the scheme.

The group were aware that a bike shelter is currently provided at the front of the station and is used by passengers. However, the bike shelter is open to the elements and is not as secure as the bike shelters installed at Buckshaw Parkway station so wanted confirmation as to whether enclosed lockable bike shelters on a par with the shelters

installed at Buckshaw Parkway could be installed at Chorley railway station as part of any station improvement work and if so, when was this likely to take place.

Members have also expressed concerns that carriages arriving at Chorley are very crowded at peak times. Please can consideration be given to increasing the number of carriages to reduce over-crowding at peak times. We understand that there may be extra carriages available when the electrification of the Liverpool line is complete and any update you can give on this matter in relation to trains on the Chorley line would be welcomed.

Northern Rail response:

*They were pleased to note the work the Council has delivered to visually improve the key gateways and access into the town centre and provided the relevant contact details were provided to support proposals being made. Once they have reviewed the scheme they will ensure that the appropriate industry persons are involved. With regards to the station itself, there are currently no plans to install more storage, however, if more funding became available in the next 12 months they would ensure that Chorley is considered.*

*Since the start of the franchise, the service has attracted almost 50% more passengers with no plan or investment fund to replace or improve the trains. However, during this time, Northern Rail have managed to expand their fleet by 20% by obtaining sixty additional carriages and although they have significantly improved the customer experience, they have not eradicated overcrowding on all of the peak time services, particularly those serving Manchester.*

Northern Rail also advised that the current Northern Franchise runs until February 2016 and any decisions beyond that date will be made by the successful bidder of the current franchising competition. The recently published Invitation to Tender (ITT) sets out the framework of what the new franchise from 2016 will be expected to deliver and it is up to the three bidders to decide how they interpret the ITT and what goes in to their bids.

The new owner of the Northern Franchise will be asked to secure efficiencies through innovative and transformational approaches to operations, retailing and customer service, and through working in partnership across the rail industry as a whole. Furthermore the Department for Transport are asking for more services, new refurbished trains, and a better experience for an increasing number of customers.

More specifically the Invitation to Tender has:

- Asked for more weekday and weekend services, especially on Sundays.
- Asked for proposals to run Boxing Day services where there is demand.
- Specified that the train fleet must be transformed by January 2020 through the introduction of 129 brand new carriages compatible for non-electrified routes and the removal of Class 142 Pacers.
- They have also asked that all remaining existing trains are refurbished to look 'new' or 'nearly new'.

## **Recommendations:**

- 7. That upon completion of the West Coast Strategic Studies process (expected April 2016) the Council will seek an update from and continue to lobby Lancashire County Council and Network Rail on the establishment of a railway station at Coppull.**
- 8. That Chorley Council follows-up the Northern Rails commitment to looking at the lighting at Adlington station and if necessary also follow-up the delivery of the Customer Information Screens if installation does not take place in Summer 2015.**
- 9. Once the Council is aware of the new franchise holder (from February 2016), the Executive Cabinet to continue to lobby and raise the current issues, in particular to include additional rail services to the airport from Adlington from December 2016.**
- 10. That consideration is given to including railway station enhancements and other public transport infrastructure across the borough in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) 123 list revisions and be monitored by the Council to ensure funding is allocated and commitments are fulfilled.**
- 11. That any conditions made through the Buckshaw Village S106 agreement regarding the up-grading and re-opening of Alker Lane Bridge which will improve access to Buckshaw Railway Station from Astley Village is followed up by the Council to ensure commitments are fulfilled.**

## **COMBINED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY**

Since May 2013 there has been a Transport for Lancashire Committee (a sub-committee of the LEP) which is chaired by Lancashire County Council's leader and comprises of representatives from the two unitary councils - Blackburn and Blackpool, Network Rail, Highways Agency and the Department for Transport. The committee was established after the Government agreed in September 2012 to hand power to new local transport bodies as part of its localism agenda.

The initial role of the Committee was to agree the major transport investment programme covering the three areas comprising Lancashire. In July 2013 the Committee agreed the investment programme. All delivery and operational matters will continue to rest with the respective local transport authorities.

In May 2014 the role of the Group was amended and will now advise the LEP Board with regard to progress and delivery of all transport schemes programmed for delivery through the Growth Deal. This is because the devolved funding for the local major transport schemes has been included in the Single Local Growth Fund.

Whilst the current arrangement demonstrates that collaboration already exists to some degree between the three upper tier Council's in Lancashire with regards delivery of major transport schemes, members of the task group were aware that the Lancashire Authorities are currently considering whether to seek approval to establish a Combined Authority for Lancashire which would involve the establishment of a transport body<sup>21</sup>

with a wider remit. Consequently, the task group sought to understand better the role, priorities and projects of a typical existing Combined Transport Authority as part of a Combined Authority and what the impact/benefits this has on residents.

In light of the above, the Group welcomed Councillor Guy Harkin and Rod Fawcett from Transport for Greater Manchester Joint Committee that had come to talk about the work of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority with regards to public transport in Greater Manchester and in particular outline what benefits there were for the people of Greater Manchester with regards public transport provision through having a Combined Authority.

Greater Manchester currently has around 2.7 million residents that was still growing and had increased by 20% over the past five years. Greater Manchester was the first UK Combined Authority (established in April 2011) that consists of ten local authorities across the political spectrum working together to deliver sustainable economic growth. Based on a previous long-term foundation of consensus, stability, consistency and commitment between the authorities they have pioneered a 'city region' concept and to date, the city has seen huge economic growth and has further potential that exceeds all other UK city regions.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) comprises one elected member from each constituent body, usually the Leader and meets in public on the last Friday of each month. It has a Scrutiny Committee consisting of three members from each authority. All big transport decisions are made by the GMCA, for example agreeing the transport levy, approving the big transport infrastructure schemes and approving the Local Transport Plan. However, they are advised by the Transport for Greater Manchester Joint Committee (TfGMC) which is the Executive Transport body of the GMCA.

The TfGMC comprises 33 members from the ten authorities and its role in addition to advising the GMCA on transport policy and funding, the TfGMC also scrutinises the performance of public transport operators, monitors the delivery of one of the largest transport capital programmes in the country and scrutinises the work of TfGM (see below). To help manage this workload, three sub-committees of TfGMC have been established - Capital Projects and Policy, Bus Network and TfGM Services and Metrolink and Rail Services.

In summary, the transport policies that affect the ten districts of Greater Manchester are set by the GMCA and the TfGM Joint Committee. However, the delivery arm for the elected body is Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) formerly known as GMPTE. TfGM carries out the transport policies of GMCA and the TfGM Committee and is accountable to those bodies. TfGM owns the metrolink tram network, pays for buses in areas where no commercial services are provided and deals with concessionary fares. They also own Greater Manchester's bus stations, shelters and stops.

The key messages arising from the discussion were:

- A mechanism exists in the form of the Bus Network sub-committee for members to scrutinise all matters relating to the operation and service performance of the bus network including commercial operated services and subsidised services.
- Under delegated authority the sub-committee reviews closely and approves all proposed changes to the subsidised bus network and ensures that the cost of the subsidised general services is kept within the appropriate budget or any cash limit set by GMCA.
- Resources for funding subsidised services and concessionary fares have however reduced over recent years and the TfGMC has had difficulties influencing the commercial operators to replace subsidised bus services and influencing fare prices. However, over the next year TfGM is expected to take on greater responsibilities as part of Greater Manchester's devolution agreement. New local powers will be developed with the government covering the strategic management of Greater Manchester's bus network, highways and train stations and TFGM will take on responsibility for delivering them on a day to day basis. These powers would include the introduction of a franchise model which allows control of fares, delivery and the use of a smart card.
- Even as a Combined Authority the ability to influence rail providers is difficult. The majority of expenditure relates to the 'pass through' of the Department for Transport rail funding to Northern Rail.
- There was an acceptance by the larger dominant authorities to only take one vote on the GMCA and it was explained how the different authorities had forged good working relationships to achieve a common goal. A good relationship between the leaders was key.
- Transport infrastructure schemes were appraised and prioritised on whether they would create economic prosperity and there was a need for authorities to take a long term view that if they don't benefit this year through the delivery of a scheme in their borough they will in the next few years. Therefore everyone benefited, just maybe not at the same time.
- There is also the potential for wider negotiation for the authorities in that whilst they may have to wait longer for say transport infrastructure in their borough they may benefit sooner with regards investment in their borough on health and wellbeing.
- The provision of transport schemes into economic areas enables money to be returned into the pot from business growth which can then be re-invested in transport schemes elsewhere.
- Having one organisation to deliver policies, programmes and manage the highway network instead of ten provided economies of scale.

In summary, whilst influencing rail expenditure remains difficult it is evident that through collaboration, consensus and some degree of patience on the part of the authorities involved, the Combined Transport Authority is a key factor in generating economic prosperity in the area it covers has the potential to ensure residents can access public transport easily via smart card technology and through devolved powers will be in a<sub>23</sub>

better position to protect less profitable bus routes and ensure fares remain affordable.

Furthermore, if similar governance arrangements are introduced in a Lancashire CA it would enable one or more representatives from Chorley Borough Council (other than the Leader of the Council) to have greater influence over the bus network and its performance.

### **Recommendation:**

**12. That the Future Governance Viability Working Group notes the contents of this report on the benefits and potential areas of focus for a Combined Transport Authority for Lancashire in order to improve public transport for Chorley residents and the Council to use the findings to influence any future discussions regarding the establishment of a Combine Authority and its role in transport provision.**

### **COMMUNICATION**

The Group had concerns about how travel information was communicated to residents across the borough, particularly regarding bus times since Lancashire County Council had taken the decision several years ago to switch off the electronic passenger information boards that were sited at the Chorley Interchange. Members felt that the level of information provided could be improved, especially considering the absence of key information no longer being displayed at the individual bus stops and shelters. This included consideration of an adequate period of notice to passengers about increased fares. Some of the bus shelters were used by local companies for advertisement purpose and the Group felt that this service should offer the provision of the relevant bus time information being displayed.

In response to concerns from residents Lancashire County Council had taken the decision to improve information at the Interchange for passengers in Chorley with the help of operators Eric Wright Group. The County Council took the opportunity to extend opening hours of the information desk when completing a new contract for running the facility. The new service is now manned by staff providing greater continuity and better value for money. The opening hours have been extended from 5am to midnight providing greater accessibility for passengers. A plethora of bus timetables are available for passengers to take away and travel information is displayed at each of the stands within the Interchange as well as an overview of which bus services each area of the borough.

A wealth of other information about public transport is available on Lancashire County Council's website that includes how to apply for concessionary travel, arrange community transport services and how to obtain bus information via a text, apps and mobile service.

Although the Group welcomed the improvements that had been made by the County Council, they still felt that more could be done and following a recent offer by Stagecoach, members sought to pursue the establishment of a regular dialogue



between the company and Borough and County Councils to develop a consistent approach to the regular review of services to ensure that they met demand.

On a positive note, Members noted the use of social media by the operators regarding changes to bus services was excellent and felt that this way of communicating could be replicated through other channels of communications to keep passengers better informed of changes to the service.

**Recommendations:**

- 13. That Lancashire County Council re-considers the displaying of bus timetables at all bus stops and shelters across the borough and explores the possibilities of funding this service by the use of advertising by local companies.**
- 14. That Lancashire County Council in conjunction with the operators explores better ways of communicating increased bus fares to its customers.**

**CONCLUSION**

Good public transport links are extremely important for both residents of the borough and visitors to Chorley. Public transport is a vital component of the town economic growth as evidenced by the Greater Manchester Transport Authority and the Group felt strongly that the introduction of similar governance arrangements for a Lancashire Combined Authority would benefit Chorley by enabling the Council to have a greater influence over the bus network and its performance.

**Recommendation:**

- 15. To highlight to the Executive Cabinet the importance of considering all public transport needs for its residents when undertaking all relevant Council projects, for example, the provision of bicycle racks and storage units and positioning of bus stops as part of the Market Walk development proposals.**